

Final Food Network Restaurant Guide Reviews

New York City Restaurants

Daniel

Haute cuisine is alive and well at Daniel Boulud's long-running elegant eponymous flagship where synchronized waiters ferry out refined New French fare to a well-heeled clientele (jackets required). Prices are staggering, but once you pass through the revolving doors and settle in under Limoges-tiled chandeliers, guests are transported to an erstwhile era of dining where the prix fixe options include caviar, foie gras and lobster tails. Boulud may be known for his DB burger at his more casual restaurants, but he is at his peak here, frequently recreating decadent, labor-intensive dishes once reserved for royalty. Take Canard a la Presses. He marinates the duck in a red wine mixture for two days before being roasting it and carving it tableside. For the accompany sauce, a chrome-plated press is wheeled out to the dining room to extract every last drop of jus, which is then reduced down with foie gras and cognac. It's special-occasion dining at its finest, so avail yourself of the 2,000-bottle wine list, where you're likely to encounter a premier cru or two. If price is no object, reserve The Skybox, a glass-enclosed room suspended above the kitchen; if it is, head to the lounge, which offers an la carte menu and less formal dress code.

Photo 1: Daniel Boulud

It's all about tradition for chef Daniel Boulud, who recreates decadent, labor-intensive dishes that were historically reserved for kings and queens.

Photo 2: close up of the duck or the chrome-plated press

Canard a la Presse is long on labor and flavor. The duck is marinated for 48 hours and the sauce requires a press to extract the jus.

Photo 3: Tableside presentation

Old-school tableside service is alive and well at Daniel, where waiters wheel out carving stations and parade finished dishes across the dining room.

Photo 4: Ted Allen in the dining room

When Ted Allen wants to be served like a king, he splurges at Daniel Boulud's exclusive namesake Manhattan eatery.

Brindle Room

Former *Chopped* contestant Jeremy Spector cooked at some of Manhattan's top restaurants, but he lures locals to his homey East Village gastropub with a slate of mid-priced inventive American comfort food, served in shareable portions. The star is Sebastian's Steakhouse Burger: a patty-cheddar-caramelized onion combo that *Diner, Drive-Ins and Diners* host Guy Fieri declared, "dynamite." Spector starts with a

mix of high-end cuts (bone-in prime, dry aged beef necks and chuck roast) ground and mixed with creamy white beef fat to create a patty that's bursting with flavor, then sears it in a hot cast-iron pan to achieve the perfect crust. Other required eating include Fisherman Stew, nightly-changing Blue Plate specials such as Beef Bourguignon (executed from Julia Child's recipe) and duck confit poutine, a playful twist on the Canadian guilty pleasure featuring hand-cut fries, cheese curds, house-cured duck confit and duck gravy. Such hearty fare cries out for hearty beer and the bar obliges with a compact selection of local and European selections; it's also home to \$1 oysters during happy hour. An eclectic weekend brunch menu featuring the likes of shakshuka, smoked salmon hash and fresh salted caramel doughnuts (with a bit of mashed potato in the dough!) draws the morning crowd.

Photo 1: exterior shot

Sit at the bar, catch the game and enjoy delicious American comfort food at this unpretentious neighborhood haunt in the East Village.

Photo 2: Chef Jeremy Spector with Guy in front of the meat

The secret to the burger starts with a high-end grind; chef Jeffrey Spector grinds his own, then mixes in 30% beef fat.

Photo 3: close up of the burger

No lettuce, tomato or fancy brioche bun here: the Sebastian Steakhouse Burger keeps it simple to let the unadulterated beefy flavor shine through.

Ippudo

225 TK

This East Village flagship of the ever-expanding ramen empire is widely credited as the first to bring Hakata-style tonkotsu (pork-base) broth to U.S. shores back in 2008, and despite a second Midtown branch and myriad of competitors it has spawned, it still generates infamous waits upwards of two hour waits, from lunch to late-night. Options like sukiyaki and grilled Kobe-style steak are delicious but stay focused: you're here for the ramen, which you can customize from a variety of broths, noodle styles and toppings. The most popular options are the Shiromaru Hakata Classic, an intensely rich and creamy pork-based broth topped with pork chashu, sesame kikurage mushrooms and red pickled ginger, and the Akamaru Modern Ramen, which shares the same noodles and broth base as the Shiromaru, but gets spiced up with a dollop of Ippudo's secret Umami Dama paste and garlic oil. Specialty appetizers such as shishito peppers dusted with yuzu salt and hirata steamed buns served with mayo and spicy sauce are also not to be missed. The handsome wood-lined digs, replete with jazz playing in the background and a bar stocking an extensive list of sakes, Japanese whiskey and shochu-based cocktails,

are additional reasons to linger, but diners short on time or patience can visit Kuro-Obi, the team's quick-service ramen bars ladling out chicken-based "tori paitan" ramen to slurpers on the go.

Photo 1: Claire Robinson

On *The Best Thing I Ever Ate*, Claire Robinson gives two chopsticks to the Akamaru Modern Ramen, a spiced-up version of the signature tonkatsu.

Photo 2: close up of the Shiromaru hakata classic

Ramen master Fumihiro Kanegae calls good ramen "a cosmos in a bowl", which bears little resemblance to those packets we lived on in college.

Photo 3: close up of the ramen making

Ippudo makes its own noodles daily; the dough is rolled out on a special machine and then pulled by hand.

Barbuto

Jonathan Waxman's reputation as "the Eric Clapton of chefs" explains why crowds continue to flock to his trendy West Village trattoria turning out housemade pastas, wood-fired pizzas and other rustic Italian fare well over a decade after it first hit the scene. The lunch and dinner menus change daily, following the vagaries of the season, but you can never go wrong the crispy potato gnocchi, hangar steak or legendary *pollo al forno*, a half roasted chicken that Tyler Florence once proclaimed as "perfect, absolutely perfect." Waxman starts the bone-on chicken on the grill, then smashes skin-side down into a scorching hot pan and finishes it in the oven to achieve a perfectly crackly skin. Salsa verde, a piquant coarsely chopped paste of capers, garlic and anchovy, drizzled on top just before serving pulls the dish together. The laid-back industrial digs, replete with red-checkered napkins, white brick walls and an open kitchen where Waxman is frequently seen cooking, can get punishingly loud when the bottles of vino come out, but acoustics ease up during the warmer weather when the garage doors are rolled up and café tables spill onto the sidewalk. Come weekends, *piatti all' uovo* (egg dishes) round out the brunch offerings.

Photo 1: Tyler Florence or close up of the chicken

The first time Tyler Florence tried Barbuto's roasted chicken, it stopped him in his tracks. "Mine doesn't hold a candle to it."

Photo 2: Close up of the chicken with the restaurant in the background

Practice makes perfect. Waxman estimates he probably cooked 100,000 chickens in his life.

Photo 3: Shot of Jonathan Waxman in front of the wood-burning stove
Chef-owner Jonathan Waxman has undeniable star power; he was described at a “culinary comet” by The New York Times.

Photo 4: close up of the wood-fired oven
Much of the menu—including the signature chicken and thin-crust pizzas—are coaxed out of the wood-fired oven.

Keens Steakhouse

Since 1885, Keens Steakhouse has been serving diners quintessential chophouse fare like enormous steaks and traditional American classics such as wedge salad and Dover sole in a men’s club setting replete with wood-panels, leather banquettes, vaudeville posters and 90,000 clay churchwarden pipes hanging from the ceiling. It’s a carnivore’s paradise, but regulars come to the Midtown Manhattan mainstay primarily for two things: expertly cooked prime rib and mutton chops. For the prime rib, executive chef William Rodgers dry-ages in a meat locker for 10 days before seasoning it simply with salt and pepper and slow-roasting it. Served in its own jus, the result is 32 ounces of delectable beef that’s crispy on the outside, meltingly tender on the inside. The legendary mutton chop, well over a million served to date, showcases a juicy, nearly two-inch tall, 26-ounce, bone-in saddle of lamb served with its own juices. Both are served at lunch and dinner, with requisite a la carte sides like creamed spinach and baked potato, though guest wanting something lighter can opt for a Cobb salad or sirloin steak salad. The more casual pub room, seated on a first-come, first-serve basis, offers a scaled back menu along with a great selection of whisky, during the week.

Photo 1: Close of Madison Cowan dining with the brick wall and fireplace in the background

When Madison Cowan wants to treat himself to a hunky of beefy goodness, there’s only one place he goes to: Keens.

Photo 2: close up of prime rib with au jus

When it’s time to order, you only need to know two words: King’s Cut. 32-ounces of fatty, dry-aged prime rib.

Photo 3: Close up of chef

Executive chef William Rodgers starts with a 20-pound, bone-in whole roast that he dry-ages in a meat locker for 10 days

Mighty Quinn's Barbeque

Former *Chopped* champion Hugh Mangum cooks meat the old-school way—with wood and time—at Mighty Quinn’s, his East Village barbecue joint (with outposts in Brooklyn, New Jersey and the Far East) cranking out Texas- and Carolina-style smoked meats, along with down-home sides like sweet corn fritters and burnt-end baked beans. The counter-service spot may like another hipster spot with white metro tiles, industrial bar stools and roll up garage door that opens during warm weather, but the cue is the real deal. Craving a succulent short rib that’s as massive as it is mouthwatering? Go big with the Brontosaurus Rib, a cut so large it looks like it could come from a dinosaur (technically, it’s called a “full-plate short rib” that weighs around five pounds before its smoked). Prepared with just three ingredients (Hungarian paprika, salt and coarsely ground black pepper) and smoked for twelve hours, the result is a tender slab of falling-off-the-bone meat with crispy bark. Other can’t miss items include slow-smoked chicken wings, pork spare ribs, Dirty Frites, smothered with burnt ends, chile-lime sauce, and onions, and of course, bread pudding. If you can’t make the trek, don’t despair: the restaurant ships its brisket, ribs and burnt ends nationwide.

Photo 1: Mighty Quinn exterior

New York ain’t Kansas City, but bbq aficionados say this East Village pit master, specializing in hormone-free, pasture-raised cattle, cooks up some of the best.

Photo 2: Shot of the lady eating the Brontosaurus Rib

The falling-off-the-bone prehistoric-looking Brontosaurus Rib is so massive even Fred Flintstone would love it. Cookbook author Katie Lee calls it “pure meat magic.”

Photo 3: Hugh Mangum

Former drummer-turned-chef Hugh Mangum has become a brisket mogul; Mighty Quinn’s has branches in New York, New Jersey, Asia and Dubai.

LA Restaurants

Jitlada's

Don’t let the strip-mall location deter you: this family-run East Hollywood hot spot (literally) dishing up authentic Southern Thai cuisine since 1971 is the real deal, and by that we mean real spicy. Sure you’ll find safe choices like pad Thai and satay on the menu, but regulars like L.A. critic Jonathan Gold who wait up for up to two hours for seat are come for the adventurous fiery fare. One bite into Jitlada's Crying Tiger Pork and you’ll see why the name is a perfect fit. Australian celebrity chef Curtis Stone once described the dish as “hot, hot, hot” before wiping away a tear. But all of the specialties, such as green mussel curry and Phangga Jungle Curry, are home cooking at its best. Everything’s made from scratch and that level of caring is palpable in the food--every bite is a perfect symphony of sweet, spicy, and sour. Other must-order dishes include tumeric fried chicken wings and an off-menu Jazz Burger, named after co-owner Sarintip “Jazz” Singasan, that’s laced with dried chilies

and wrapped in a lettuce leaf, protein-style. Just make sure you have plenty of napkins on hand—one for your lips and one to mop the sweat beading down your forehead.

Photo 1 : Close up of Pork or Curtis

Crying Tiger Pork always bring a tear to Curtis Stone's eye. "Before you know it, you're entire mouth is on fire."

Photo 2: shot of the female chef mixing up the sauce

Chef Sarintip Singsanon sauces are a careful balance of sweet, sour, spicy and unforgettable. Her goal? "Make someone cry."

Photo 3: 2.02 mark shot of a finished dish with Thai décor and bric and brac in the background.

Since 1971, celebrities, restaurant critics and fiery food fiends have been flocking to this family-run, authentic Thai eatery.

Cha Cha Chili

If you love Mexican AND Korean food, this hidden gem in industrial East L.A. slinging kimchee quesadillas, Korean Philly cheesesteaks and Korean tacos since 2009 is worth seeking out; despite being located in the middle-of-nowhere—look for the bright signs and Christmas lights—it draws long lines of diners who can't get enough of chef Galvin Cha's culinary mash-ups. Guy Fieri, host of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, is among one of his many fans; the celebrity chef stops by every time he's in the area. Rest assured, in Cha's expert hands, fusion doesn't mean confusion; for his El Jefe short rib tacos topped with chunks of chipotle, avocado, salsa verde and cotilla cheese, Cha marinades the short ribs in a traditional Korean marinade for 24 hours before grilling them over mesquite, and he makes and presses his own roasted-corn tortillas in house. Other not-to-be-missed dishes include spicy pork chimichangas, crab-filled jalapeno bombs, spicy rice bowls (also check his not-so-secret-menu where Cha tries out new ideas) Coming here is like your visiting favorite food truck (served in the same red-checked lined plastic red baskets, natch), only there's plenty of inside and outdoor seating, where you watch the trucks roll by.

Photo 1: chef Gavin Cha holding the meat in front of the sign. (41 seconds in)

It ain't fancy but it works; Cha barbecues his meats in a conventional backyard grill set up outside the restaurant.

Photo 2: Guy Fieri eating the short rib

The Korean-Mexican mashups caught the attention of *Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives* host Guy Fieri, who stops by whenever he's in LA.

Photo 3: close up of the short rib

Cha's short rib tacos—dubbed El Jefe—truly are the boss. Kiwi enzymes in the marinade help tenderized the meat.

Photo 4: close up of the tortilla press, ground up roasted corn, handmade corn tortilla

Cha makes his own masa, to which he folds in fresh roasted corn kernels and presses them in a traditional *tortilladora*.

Barton G

Step right up to this gastronomic carnival in West Hollywood dedicated to put the “fun” in fine dining, where the quirky New American fare comes with a side of whimsy. Angelinos love their theatrics and there's plenty to go around here; event-planner-turned-restaurateur Barton G Weiss spared no expense creating a swanky multi-sensory dining room dominated by a 15-foot pink onyx bar where bartenders whip up nitrogen-infused drinks, boozy popsicles and other smoking libations. The spectacle continues at the table where entertaining waiters ferry out stunt food like lobster Pop Tarts with retro toaster ovens for tableside toasting and a four-foot tall fork accompanies the massive Great American steak platter. Executive chef Attila Bollok has serious kitchen bone fides, but isn't afraid to inject a little humor into his food, and his over-the-top presentations are worth the price of admission alone. For an unforgettable dessert experience be sure to order the Marie Antoinette Cotton Candy Head (you can't really miss, is as its wheeled around the dining room): a two-foot-high wig of cotton candy hair artfully arranged on a mannequin head and accompanied by a slice of rich vanilla cake covered in pink frosting. Off with her head, indeed!

Photo 1: close up of the Marie Antoinette cake

The outlandish Marie Antoinette-inspired dessert, a two-foot tall wig made of cotton candy served with vanilla cake would be at home in decadent court of Versailles.

Photo 2: Lobster Pop Tarts in the pink toaster

Leggo my Eggo! Be sure to two orders of these housemade lobster pop tarts. Toasted tableside in retro toasters, you aren't going to want to share.

Photo 3: Screen shot of the executive chef Attila Bollok.

Executive chef Attila Bollok trained in serious kitchens, but isn't afraid to inject a little fun into his food.

Photo 4: Jonathan Bennett with the Marie Antoinette cake

When actor Jonathan Bennett wants a guilty pleasure, he heads to this West Hollywood haunt to get a sugar high

Son of a Gun

This nautical-themed Beverly Grove seafooder kitted out with buoys, captain's wheels and mounted fish and run by hotshot restaurateurs Vinny Dotolo and Jon Shook (of Animal) reels in the locals with updated fish-shack staples such as lobster rolls, peel-and-eat shrimp and fish-and-chips, along with more adventurous dished like uni and burrata with yuzu and a shrimp toast sandwich spiked with hoisin and Sriracha mayo. But son of a gun, it's the fried chicken sandwich—a landlubber dish served at both lunch and dinner--that steals the show and is most frequently seen being ferried out to the weather-beaten tables. It's a beaut of a bird--crispy battered humanely-raised Jidori chicken breast nestled on a buttered bun that's been slathered with a creamy aioli and topped with a tangy slaw with jalapenos and pickles--so don't let this one get away. The dining room isn't much bigger than your average recreation vessel and only accepts reservations for large parties, so plan to arrive at early to nab a seat at the communal table the bar, where you can wash your meal down with a fermented coconut porter pineapple shandy, a glass of Champagne or a good ole Coors Bouquet. Cheers matey!

Photo 1: shot of Jeel White

When actor Jeel White is craving a fried chicken sandwich "like no other", he heads to Son of Gun.

OR "If you don't like this chicken sandwich," says actor Jeel White, "you're a vegan and you just haven't come out yet."

Photo 2: Close up of fried chicken

The signature fried chicken sandwich, slathered with creamy aioli and topped with a tangy jalapeno-spiked slaw, is the number one requested item on the menu.

Photo 3: Chef de cuisine David Sykes with the nautical décor in the background. Every inch of the tiny joint is covered in nautical bric a brac—think fishing nets, lifesavers and the requisite mounted bass.

Greenblatt's Deli and Fine Wines

For delicious Old World nosh like Bubbe used to make, you can't get anymore authentic than Greenblatt's Deli, a family-run old-school delicatessen on Sunset Boulevard that's been slinging triple decker deli sandwiches and other Jewish comfort food like matzo ball soup and slow-cooked brisket since 1926. For a truly tasty sandwich, sink your teeth into the No. 3 Pastrami, one of the most popular menu items. A decadent creation, this meaty sandwich is built with layer upon layer of thinly sliced pastrami, Swiss cheese, creamy coleslaw and Russian dressing, all nestled between slices of pumpernickel bread. It's a messy three-napkin affair that's completely worth the mess. Despite the no-frills décor and no-nonsense service, the beverage selection is no chopped liver; aside from Dr. Brown's sodas and other nonalcoholic drinks, Greenblatt's offers an impressive selection of wines and spirits

courtesy of its fine wine retail shop next door. Long a favorite of Hollywood hoi polloi (Marilyn Monroe, Danny Kaye and Billie Holiday were just a few of the many regulars), Greenblatt's continues to draw crowds of Angelinos any time the urge for corned beef or New York Style cheesecake strikes--it's open continuously from 8am to 2am daily.

Photo 1: David Allan Grier eating the sandwich as it drips down his hand. Actor David Allan Grier is so crazy for Greenblatt's No. 3 Pastrami, he orders it to go, and devours it in the car ride back home.

Photo 2: Close-up of the pastrami with the stained glass window in the background. For a guilty pleasure—hold the guilt—order the No. 3, piles of thinly sliced pastrami on pumpernickel, slathered with Russian dressing and coleslaw.

Photo 3: mac and cheese
Generous portions of sides like macaroni and cheese are rich and decadent, just like they should be.

Eggslut

Sure it's got a memorable name, but Egg Slut's addicting breakfast and lunch sandwiches are the real reason why Angelinos battle traffic and wait in long lines to eat the popular food stall located in downtown L.A.'s Grand Central Market. Founded in 2011 as a food truck peddling its crack-of-the-day fare on the street, its cult following soon grew so big that owner Alvin Cailan opened a permanent brick-and-mortar location in 2013 and later a branch in Venice Beach. The kitchen goes through about 9,000 cage-free eggs a week, but even in the shiny white indoor digs, the lunch counter still only offers a half dozen of ovo-centric breakfast sandos such as The Fairfax, soft scrambled eggs topped with chives, caramelized onions, cheddar and Sriracha mayo piled on a warm brioche bun and a turkey-based sausage, egg and cheese Sandwich that Ted Allen dubbed "the best, you-won't-miss-the-pork breakfast sandwich ever." An Angus cheeseburger crowned with an over-easy egg is another popular lunch item, but what really gets fans crowing is the racy-sounding Slut, a single coddled egg served in a glass jar nestled on a bed of creamy potato purée, that's garnished with gray salt and chives and served with toasted baguette. Closes daily at 4pm.

Photo 1: close up of breakfast sandwich with the yolk dripping
Good breakfast sandwiches should be a little messy and this one slathered with honey mustard aioli is guaranteed to run down your chin.

Photo 2: inside of the Central Market with white background.
Founder Alvin Cailan got his start peddling his breakfast staples from a food truck, but its popularity prompted him to make a permanent home in the Central Market.

Photo 3: Shot of the crates of eggs.

The kitchen goes through about 9,000 eggs a week. That's nothing to crack about.

Roscoe's House of Chicken 'n Waffles

Breakfast just isn't breakfast without chicken cluck fans of this beloved SoCal soul-food chain with seven locations in the Los Angeles area, including Hollywood, dishing up fried chicken and waffles, both together and separately, along with others sinfully good Southern comfort food like cornbread, grits and collard greens in a diner setting since 1975. The combination--known as a Herb Special, named after the owner---might sound like unusual bedfellows, but the legions of fans agree it's a "genius" combination—delivering equal parts sweet, savory, salty, crispy, gooey in one bite. Of course, you don't have to have to order the waffles. Early risers can ease into the day with traditional breakfast fare like scrambled eggs and while another popular lunch item is The Oscar, which features the signature fried chicken—super crunchy on the outside, perfectly juicy on the inside served with buttery grits, biscuit and a fried egg. Roscoes' has been featured in countless movies, rap songs and TV shows, and regularly attracts a steady stream of celebrities including Snoop Dog, Alan Grier and President Obama (who has a menu special named after him) from dawn to late-night: the Hollywood location serves 'til 4 am on Friday and Saturdays.

Photo 1: Alan Grier eating or exterior (use this video not the Duff Goldman one <http://www.foodnetwork.com/shows/guilty-pleasures.html>)

Actor Alan Grier has been hooked on Roscoe's Chicken n' Waffles since his early *In Living Color* days.

Photo 2: close up of the waffle maker

Roscoe's chefs won't share what's in the proprietary waffle mix, but tell us it takes three minutes on the waffle maker to achieve that golden goodness.

Photo 3: close up the chix and waffles

Don't knock it 'til you try it. Crispy fried chicken, doused with hot sauce, is the perfect foil to waffle-syrup doused waffles.

DC Restaurants

Jaleo

As a famed ambassador of Spanish cuisine, chef Jose Andres's multiple restaurants have become DC institutions, but this Penn Quarter flagship celebrating the spirit and flavors of Spain is where it all started. Andres spawned the small-plates craze back when it opened in 1993, and two decades later, his signature tapas are still gets "oles!" from locals and tourists who stop by after visiting the National Mall. With over 60 small plates to choose from (we

recommend Ferran Adrià's-inspired liquid olives and anything with Jamón Ibérico, the legendary, acorn-fed, black-footed Iberico pigs of Spain), you can easily make a meal out of them, but be sure to save room for the nightly paellas. The kitchen's expert execution of the iconic Spanish rice dish, cooked until slightly al dente, permeated with flavor, and offset by a crispy layer that forms on the bottom of the pan known as *socarrat*, is "the real deal" marvels celebrity chef Marc Murphy, who declares it "the best paella I've ever eaten." The colorful dining room kitted out with foosball tables, whimsical avant-garde art and a bar specializing in superb sangrias and wines from the Iberico Peninsula contribute to a partylike atmosphere that continues well into the night.

Photo 1: close up of paella with shrimp

Whenever Chopped judge Marc Murphy visits Washington, he heads to Jaleo and orders the paella, which he admits, "blows mine out of the water."

Photo 2: Black and white photo of Jose Andres with the bullshead in the background.

"He is the real deal in Spanish food" says Murphy, about founding chef and legendary kitchen wizard Jose Andres.

Photo 3: neon light of exterior Jaleo

Jose Andre's groundbreaking modernist Spanish restaurant is like a beacon in Penn Quarters, beckoning diners with groundbreaking tapas and creative cocktails.

Minibar at Café Atlantico

Chef Jose Andres is known for his genre-setting tapas restaurants throughout the D.C. metro area, but its here, at his chic six-seat two-Michelin-starred restaurant presenting high-end modernist cuisine tasting menus that titillate the eyes and the palate, where his true wizardry is on display. More like dinner and a show (and priced accordingly), a typical evening might begin with Caprese Salad Injection, a single peeled cherry tomato skewered on a pipette filled with liquid mozzarella, before progressing through a series of more than twenty small bites, each designed to "thrill the senses by pushing the limits of what diners have come to expect is possible from food." Have your camera ready, as the kitchen employs a wide range of high-tech tricks (think foams, liquid nitrogen and dry ice) along with traditional cooking technique to craft museum-like gastronomical artfully presented, say under a glass dome or on top of a bed of moss. Only twelve lucky diners are seated nightly at the communal tables, but if you can't score a reservation, stop into barmini, his avant-garde cocktail lab next door that not only plies Minibar patrons with its beverage pairings, but also serves its own a la carte menu of imaginative modern small-plates.

Photo 1: Jose Andres

Famed Spanish chef Jose Andres pulls out all the stops, with the help of some chemistry lab instruments, at his exclusive DC prix fixery.

Photo 2: Giada de Laurentiis

Giada de Laurentiis is a sucker for caprese salad, but was blown away when she tried Minibar's one-bite rendition. "It just explodes. Pow! Boom! Done! Phenomenal!"

Photo 3: Shot of the counter

Plan ahead; Minibar only accommodates twelve lucky guests a night and reservations fill up two months in advance.

Photo 4: close-up of the Caprese Salad

This Caprese Salad Injection features tomato and basil skewered on a pipette filled with liquid mozzarella, which deliver a squirt of pure unadulterated flavor of cheese.

Oohh's & Aahhs Restaurant

Oohhs & Aahhs Restaurant will make you do exactly that. This no-frills midtown D.C. joint dishing up Southern comfort food with a Cajun accent may not look like much, but it's the real deal when it comes to soul food. And we're not just talking your average everyday soul food; co-owners Oji Abbot and India Wilson faithfully recreates recipes passed down from their grandmothers. "My grandmother would probably beat me if I did it any different" jokes Abbott. Clearly, they're something right because the quick-service spot that eschews china for Styrofoam caught the attention of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives* host Guy Fieri, who can't get enough of their grilled shrimp and grits. Tossed in a housemade Cajun seasoning (Old Bay Seasoning, black pepper, garlic, chili powder, ground ginger, red pepper flakes) before griddled in butter, the shrimp are a flavorful foil to the creamy grits. Generous servings of other popular items such as spicy Buffalo wings, fried chicken, and macaroni and cheese are additional reasons why it consistently wins "Best Cheap Eats" awards from *Washingtonian Magazine* and visits from celebrities such as Jay Z and Labron James. Night owls take note: on Fridays and Saturdays, the kitchen stays open until 4am.

Photo 1: Guy Fieri out front of the sign

Signs don't lie. Oohs & Aahh's had Guy Fieri doing just that on his last visit to the capital city.

Photo 2: Lamone Jones

Former NFL running back Lamone Jones is one of the many celebrities who come here when they're in town.

Photo 3: Guy and co-owner Oji Abbot in front of the stove by the grits.
Co-owner Oji Abbot follows his grandmother's recipes like grilled shrimp and grits to a tee.

Founding Farmers

With a nod to our founding fathers, this farm-to-table eatery located just three blocks west of the White House, draws long lines day and night with innovative American comfort foods served in an urbane farmhouse setting. The name also pays homage to the 42,000 American family farmers who supply the seasonally driven menu. Start the meal off with right with house-baked skillet cornbread slathered with pesto and tomato chow-chow or the signature "Devilish" Egg Sampler, a favorite of TV host Richard Irvine. Executive chef Al Nappo gets a running start with fresh eggs delivered daily, then ups the ante by topping them with lobster, smoked salmon and crab meat from Chesapeake Bay. But the real magic happens when the seafood hits the zesty housemade Louis Dressing. Other mainstays include Yankee pot roast and chicken and waffles served with a rotating "crop list" of sides, while temptations such as Uncle Buck's beignets with raspberry, chocolate and caramel sauce reward weekend brunch-goers. The restaurant's ethos is felt everywhere from the local artisans who furnish the LEED Gold Certified dining room to the bar that proudly pours proprietary spirits and wines; after all, winegrowers are farmers too!

Photo 1: Sampler of the Devilish Eggs
"Eggs have never been better," swoons Richard Irvine about this quartet of "Devilish" eggs.

Photo 2: Exterior of the restaurant
Founding farmers bakes their own bread, grinds their own beef, presses its own juices, and even churns its own butter.

Photo 3: Chef Al Nappo
Chef Al Nappo updates traditional American comfort with fresh, seasonal ingredients courtesy of the 42,000 local farmers who supply the restaurant.

Tortilla Cafe

You don't need security clearance to know that best-kept secret in DC for authentic Latin American cuisine is this unassuming quick-service café tucked away in the bustling Eastern Market in Capitol Hill. Dishing up a little spice and no politics since 2010, this father-and-daughter-run hidden gem lures early risers with rancheros and breakfast burritos, but pols, plebians and Food Network hosts flock here during

lunch and dinner for giant platters of Salvadorian house specialties, such as its legendary made-from-scratch pupusas, served with a choice of two sides for less than \$10. The kitchen makes five different varieties, but *Diners Drive-In and Dives* host Guy Fieri is *loco* for their pork-and-cheese—pockets of housemade maseca (unflavored masa) stuffed with fistfuls of seasoned slow-cooked pork, fresh mozzarella and ricotta cheese, then griddled to order and served with pickled slaw and salsa. Other popular items include braised chicken sandwiches and chicken tamales studded with chickpeas, green olives, and potatoes wrapped Salvadorian-style in plantain leaves. Seating inside is tight, so head to patio where you can wash down your meal with traditional non-alcoholic drinks like a Salvadorian version of horchata made from morro seeds and freshly-pressed maracuya (passion fruit) juice, while watching the passersby.

Photo:

Exterior with Guy Fieri

“The flavors are great and I love the crispiness. You got try it!” effuses Fieri.

Close up of the pupusa on Styrofoam plate

For the pork and cheese pupusas, slow-cooked pork seasoned with cumin, fresh garlic and adobo and fajita spices are blended with fresh mozzarella and ricotta cheese then griddled to order and served with pickled slaw and housemade salsa.

Close up of the pupusa on the griddle

“Mexicans use corn husks” points out Catalina Caneles, who wraps her tamales the Salvadorian-way, in plantains leaves.

Art and Soul

Note: this video is very out of date; Art Smith is no longer affiliated and they don't serve chicken for two on the menu anymore. They do offer a different fried chicken dish. Don't include a photo of Art.

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/videos/fried-chicken-for-two-0250101.html>

Located in the swanky boutique Liaison Hotel in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, just a stone's throw from the Capitol building and Union Station, this D.C. mainstay dishes up elevated soulful Southern comfort foods like crab deviled eggs, pimento cheese and 12-hour smoked pork along with more adventurous fare such as chickpea and black eyed pea fritters and mole-braised short ribs made with farm fresh ingredients. Everything from the food to the fabric of the waiters' uniform to the hand-painted farm signs in the dining reflects the restaurant's belief in supporting regional family-owned business. Although founding chef Art Smith has

moved on, under the talented executive chef Douglas Alexander, it's still a soulful spot to enjoy a bowl of spicy pork rinds and a pint, particularly at lunch or brunch during the warm weather, when guests can dine al fresco on the large pooch-friendly patio and admire the views or at night while sipping a small-batch cocktail by the roaring fire-pit. Constituents on both side of the political aisle can agree one thing: the decadent weekend brunch offerings think fried chicken and waffles, biscuits and gravy and housemade Bloody Marys are worth getting out of a bed for.

Photo 1: Rocco DiSpirito or close up of the fried chicken—just a single piece tho—not the cast-iron skillet for 2.

When Rocco DiSpirito is jonesing for fried chicken, he beelines it to Art and Soul in DC.

Photo 2: Interior shot with sign and the fried chicken in the foreground
Just minutes from the Capitol Dome, this indoor/outdoor eatery dishes delicious Southern comfort fare and late-night snacks.

Photo 3: close up of collard greens

People in the South insist that collard greens fix anything. Whether they or don't, Art & Soul's spicy version is delicious.